



CENTRE AGRO-ENTREPRISE
Mali Sustainable Economic Growth

MONITORING AND EVALUATION TRIP REPORT MALI SEG PROJECT
Contract No. 624-C-00-98-00012-00

Submitted to :
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By :
CHEMONICS INTERNATIONAL INC.
1133 20th Street NW **Rue 124, Porte 310, Korofina Nord**
Washington, DC 20036 **BP 34, Bamako, Mali**

And :
Felix F. LEE

January 29 to February 9, 2001

Table of content

I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Background	1
	Objectives	1
	Methodology	1
II	ANALYSIS	2
	Status of the CAE M&E System	2
	Contractual Requirements for CAE M&E and Result Framework	2
III	DISCUSSIONS	4
	Typical Approach to M&E	4
	Approach to Completing the CAE Results Framework	4
	Performance Monitoring Plan	5
IV	RECOMMENDATIONS	8
	ANNEX	

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Mali SEG (Sustainable Economy Growth) project, locally known as the CAE (Centre Agro-Entreprise) is in its third year of implementation. The CAE has been operating a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system as required by the contract with USAID Mali. However, there are differences of opinion between the CAE team and USAID Mali's SEG management team over the appropriateness of the M&E system, contractual requirements of M&E and CAE input to USAID Mali's needs to report results in its annual R4 (Results Report and Resource Request). As the CAE is now preparing its third year work plan, it is critical to address these differences and make sure that CAE is on track to fulfilling its objectives and contractual obligations.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the M&E consultation are :

- To evaluate the current status of the CAE M&E system,
- To determine USAID Mali's needs for results reporting ; and their expectations and requirements from CAE,
- To propose modification to the CAE M&E system in response to USAID Mali's needs and Chemonics' contractual obligations,
- To propose a structure for carrying out M&E functions within CAE.

1.3 Methodology

The consultation was carried out through examination of program document, interviews with key CAE staff, meetings with USAID SEG staff, and group working sessions with the CAE's technical teams. The following document are consulted :

- CAE Annual Reports
- CAE Work Plan I
- CAE Work Plan II
- CAE Work Plan III (draft)
- June 2000 M&E Consultation by Alain Andriamananony
- Mali SEG Strategic Plan
- Mali SEG Results Framework
- Chemonics' original technical proposal and BAFO responses to SEG
- Chemonics' Contract with USAID Mali
- Consultancy report on CAE workflow (draft)

A list of persons interviewed is attached in Annex A.

II. Analysis

2.1 Status of the CAE M&E System

During the June 2000 consultancy by Mr. Alain Andriamananony, the CAE M&E system was examined in detail. A quick review of the M&E system in early February 2001 confirms that the system has not changed substantially in the past seven months. This section of the report will therefore not reiterate the detail findings of the June 2000 report but will contain general observations.

The current M&E database, designed in 1998, focuses on the internal management of the CAE and is largely based on CAE client and partner contacts that are tracked using different forms designed by CAE agents. In reality, this is a client management database and not a monitoring and evaluation system. It is not linked to the implementation strategy of the CAE and does not address the activities of the CAE, its output, or impacts. Because of this design, the original M&E system reflects a reactive approach, rather than a proactive one. This database is now largely abandoned and not updated.

Nonetheless, the needs to provide M&E information to USAID exist and as a result, various technical units began identifying indicators concerning their respective activities. This has resulted in an ad hoc M&E system. The indicators chosen is a mix of performance indicators (benchmarks) and impact indicators (results). The focal point is placed at the activity level and explicit links to a framework of implementation strategies are lacking. Additionally, there are few systematic definitions of indicators (source, units, scope), data collection procedures, or update schedules. This reinforced the ad hoc nature of the resultant M&E system and affected its ability to systematically and satisfactorily address USAID's needs.

2.2 Contractual Requirements for CAE M&E and Results Framework

There have been considerable differences of opinion between CAE staff and USAID Mali's SEG management team on the structure of a CAE Results Framework as required by the contract. To resolve this issue, the consultant and the CAE technical coordinator, Mr. Daouda Diarra, met with the USAID SEG M&E Specialist, Mr. Augustine Dembélé on Friday February 2, 2001.

Mr. Dembélé presented USAID's Strategic Plan, specifically the sections that concern SEG and CAE. He emphasized the Intermediate Results Indicators (IRI) that are required in their Annual R4 and the requirement for CAE to provide input to the IRIs. This requirement is contained in the CAE contract.

Further examination of the contract also provided detail information on the requirements of a Results Framework and the expected elements. This is contained in section C.4 of the contract (page 16). Specifically, USAID Mali identified eleven (11) "Program Performance Measures (PPM)" for the CAE. These PPMs are :

"measures at a lower level than the approved [USAID Mali] SEG Strategic Framework Intermediate Results but at a higher level than what the Contractor [CAE] could achieve on its own. The PPMs are meant to clarify or expand actions or events necessary for achievement of higher-level Strategic Framework sub-results. Many of the PPMs will require the efforts of USAID,

the GRM, communities, PVO/NGO programs, and the TA Contractor to be achieved. No separate targets are set or required for PPMs.”

The contract specifically requires “Contractor Benchmarks” for each PPM. These are to be “statement of activities for which the Contractor can be held accountable. These are the items that will serve as evaluation factors for the Contractor’s Award Fee under the contract”. Chemonics provided some Contractor Benchmarks in the revised technical proposal submitted at BAFO, which became part of the final contract. However, the contract specifically states that those benchmarks are illustrative and that the CAE may propose alternative or additional benchmarks.

The contract further requires quantitative baseline and annual targets for each benchmark for the five years of the contract. Since the program is now entering its third year of implementation, Mr. Dembélé agrees that baseline values of each benchmark identified should be set for the beginning of year 3, i.e. the center will not be required to provide quantitative benchmark values for the two years that are completed. Everyone present agreed that doing so would not be in the interest of USAID or CAE.

The PPMs, the Contractor Benchmarks, their associated baseline and annual target values, as well as justifications on how the benchmarks will contribute to achieving the PPMs, together form the CAE Results Framework required under the contract. These requirements are stated explicitly in section C.4 of the contract. Therefore, as it is defined, the CAE has yet to complete a Results Framework that satisfies contractual requirement.

At a follow up meeting with Mr. Gaoussou Traoré and Mr. Amadou Camara, both USAID SEG members, Mr. Camara reminded the CAE team that in addition to providing a Results Framework, the CAE will also need to provide detail descriptions of how the Contractor Benchmarks are chosen, their characteristics and how they will be monitored. This constitutes a Performance Monitoring Plan.

In summary, the following items and actions are required from the CAE to satisfy contractual requirements of M&E :

- Provision of Intermediate Results Indicators, as selected by USAID Mali, within the scope of activities and coverage of the CAE.
- Provision of a CAE Results Framework that contains the eleven PPMs identified by USAID Mali, contractor benchmarks for each PPM, quantitative baseline and annual targets for each benchmark, and justifications for the selection of each benchmark.
- Provision of a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) that includes detail technical definition of each contractor benchmark including sources, units of measure, frequency, verification, and data collection responsibility.

III. Discussions

3.1 Typical Approach to M&E

A typical approach to creating and finalizing a project-level Results Framework would start with an examination of the overall strategy of program implementation within the context of the underlying USAID mission Strategic Objectives and Intermediate Results. This would normally lead to a coalescence of several main areas of program activities, or strategic ideas, that form the basis of the program-level Results Framework. These main ideas are sometimes called the program-level Intermediate Results (IR), or in the case of the CAE, the PPMs. A typical approach would continue with the development or refinement of implementation strategies for each PPM, which becomes a road map for various program activities and tasks. Benchmarks for each PPM could then be developed that are derived from or representative of PPM strategies. This collection of USAID Strategic Objective, USAID Intermediate Results, Intermediate Results Indicators, program-level IRs or PPMs, and PPM benchmarks with their accompanying baselines and annual target values together form the program-level Results Framework.

Following this typical approach, the annual work planning exercise would begin by examining each program-level IR or PPM. Activities for each PPM would then be developed, guided by the various PPM strategies. Specific tasks, timeline for their completion, responsible parties, and resource requirements and limits for each activity would then be elaborated for each activity, resulting in a logical network of implementation steps that are guided by an overall strategy that addresses the results and objectives of the program and of the USAID mission.

3.2 Approach to Completing the CAE Results Framework

For the CAE, this approach of “strategic planning” has not been explicitly carried out or documented. The program has taken an activity-level approach where program implementation is grouped by activity categories, such as cereals (rice, maize, millet, sorghum), fruit and vegetables (mango, shallot, potato), livestock, policy, training, etc. For each category, activities are identified and ad hoc indicators for certain activities are developed as described earlier. Although an examination of the activities revealed that there exists an overall strategy, this strategy is not explicit and therefore relations between PPMs and activities are not clear. There are several disadvantages with this situation. Without an explicit strategy, there is a danger of straying beyond the context of the underlying USAID Strategic Plan. There is also a danger that various team members may lose sight of the PPMs and even develop diverging approaches to program implementation. Additionally, without this over-riding strategy, it becomes difficult for USAID to evaluate the appropriateness of various program activities, delaying work plan approval and consequently implementation.

Given the path that the CAE has taken, a modification to the typical approach outlined above would be necessary. As stated, it is evident that an implicit CAE program strategy exists. A workable method now is to categorize the various work plan activities according to the eleven PPMs in order to draw out and formalize the underlying strategies for each PPM. Once these strategies are formalized, corresponding benchmarks could then be established. The final step would be to determine baseline and annual target values for the benchmarks, and complete a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) with details of the benchmarks and methods to monitor

them. In other words, this is the reverse to a typical “strategic planning” approach, which starts from the highest level of objectives and results, and drill down through formulation of strategies to the activity and task level. Given that CAE activities and tasks are already defined, the most practical approach now is to work back up and link back to the project objectives and results.

3.2.1. Nomenclature

One source of confusion concerning the program Results Framework is the translation from English to French of the various terms. The PPMs were translated as “Résultat du CAE”. The immediate meaning of the French translation directly contradict the concept that many PPMs require more than the CAE’s efforts alone. A better translation for PPM would be desirable. “Mesures de Performance du Programme” should be considered. Another difficult term to translate is Contractor Benchmark. There are several suggestions such as “Indicateur de PPM”, “Repère”, or “Borne”. CAE staff should examine this together and come to an agreement on a French term that everyone will understand.

3.2.2. Review of Program Activities and PPMs

To demonstrate the recommended approach to develop a CAE Results Framework, the consultant examined all the activities from the CAE’s Work Plan III (draft), and categorized the activities according to PPMs. Upon completion of this step, the activities at each PPM level were further examined to draw out the underlying strategies, or common approach across activity groups. Benchmarks corresponding to the underlying strategies were then suggested. The result of this exercise is included as Annex B to this report and forms the first draft of an eventual Results Framework.

Working group meetings were then held with each activity group to explain USAID Mali’s Strategic Plan, requirements for contribution to IRIs, the strategic approach to developing program-level Results Framework, and the modified approach suggested to the CAE. The draft framework was also presented to each activity group and discussed. Each group member was then tasked to examine the draft framework and refine it by making modifications to the activities, clarification to the strategies, and suggestion for benchmarks.

3.2.3. Selection of Contractor Benchmarks, Baselines, and Target

Since the CAE is now organized into functional categories, or activity groups, the selection of benchmarks by each activity group would yield results at a level lower than the PPMs. For example, the mango group may propose “number of producer groups working with the CAE to improve packaging of mangos” ; the potato group may propose “number of village groups assisted by the CAE to improve potato storage”, etc. These benchmarks are useful at the activities monitoring level, but are too detailed for use as benchmarks at the PPM level. For PPM level, a summarized benchmark such as “number of beneficiaries assisted by the CAE in adopting improved handling/transformation technologies” would be more appropriate. For this reason, a technical coordinator would be required to harmonize the results from the various activity groups and resolve differences.

3.3 Performance Monitoring Plan

When the various activity groups have completed their review of the draft Results Framework, a technical coordinator should work with everyone to finalize the Results Framework. However, to complete the M&E system, activity-level monitoring needs to be

included. This involves the identification of performance indicators that correspond to the major work plan activities of each PPM. These performance indicators will include those that are sub-components of PPM benchmark, as well as others that contribute to monitoring activities that lead towards achievement of the PPMs. Targets for these performance indicators may be established annually during work plan preparation, however, multi-year targets are typically not required since these indicators are tied intimately to the work plan, which is subject to change.

A detail technical document describing the Results Framework and the M&E system will be required. This document—the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)—will become the blueprint to M&E for the project. The PMP will include presentation of the Results Framework, detailed technical description of the IR indicators, the benchmarks, and the performance indicators.

3.3.1. Definition of Indicators

It is important to define the benchmarks and indicators properly to avoid ambiguity and confusion. For each benchmark and indicator, the following information are required :

- *Data Definition* – A precise description of the indicator, including technical specifications.
- *Data sources and collection* – How will the data be generated, and who / how will it be collected. This should include the description of data collection methodology, if appropriate.
- *Unit of measurement* – For quantitative data, units of measurement is required to avoid confusion.
- *Reporting frequency* – The frequency of data collection, e.g. monthly, quarterly, semi-annually. For most M&E systems, semi-annual data update is a good balance between adequate update interval and avoiding over-burdening the technical team with data collection activities.
- *Baseline values and methods used to establish them* – It is important to establish the initial value of each benchmark as a reference frame. The method to establish baseline values should also be noted.
- *Target values* – Annual target values for each benchmark should be established. They will serve as yardsticks to measure actual accomplishment against planned levels.
- *Critical assumptions* – Any assumptions concerning the benchmark and indicators should be noted. These would be factors beyond the control of the technical team, having potential impact on the expected performance or direction of the benchmark and indicators. Any hypotheses for the benchmarks and indicators and their target results should also be noted.

3.3.2. Data Verification

A fully functioning M&E system requires input from the CAE technical team members, Chemonics home office support staff, and CAE partners. Data for the system will come from various sources. For certain data elements, the CAE may rely on its partners for data collection. To ensure data quality, a system of data verification should be in place. There are various methods of data quality control and verification :

- *Logical Test* – Most data values exist within a *logical range*. By defining the expected range of a data value, out-of-range values could be flagged for further verification. Another type of logical test is *data progression*. Certain data values are cumulative and its value for each period should be equal to or higher (or lower) than that of the preceding period. Any data values that do not conform to the expected progression should also be flagged for investigation.
- *Consistency Test* – Some indicator pairs may be related (but not correlated). For example, if the amount of rice exported is 400 MT, then the value of rice exported cannot be zero. By defining consistency tests, erroneous values or missing data can be flagged.
- *Spot Check* – Occasionally while on field trips or site visits, CAE technicians could verify selected data elements from the original sources.
- *Correlations* – Certain indicators are correlated. In those cases, only one indicator is required for the M&E system because all of the indicators tell the same story. However, correlated indicators not formally used in the M&E reporting may be used to verify the magnitude and direction of the formal indicator in use.
- *Surveys* – Occasional surveys could also be conducted to verify certain indicators.

3.4 Roles and Responsibilities

As discussed in the preceding sub-section, a fully functioning M&E system requires input from various team members and partners. The building blocks of an M&E system are the various data elements that make up indicators and benchmarks. These data elements come from every aspect of program implementation, covering diverse topics such as data dissemination, technology investigation, capacity strengthening of financial entities, and building exporter-trader relations. To manage these data elements effectively requires active involvement of the technicians concerned. Consequently, technical members of the various activity groups would be best placed to take charge of indicators in their areas of expertise. They would be responsible for ensuring that their particular subsets of indicators are properly defined in the Performance Monitoring Plan and overseeing that the indicators are collected according to the specified frequency and methodology. A technical coordinator will still be required to assemble input from the various activity groups, synthesize the PPM benchmarks from various indicators, and providing overall quality control.

IV. Recommendations

The following is a summary of the various recommendations made as a result of this Monitoring and Evaluation consultancy :

1. The CAE team begins report on USAID Mali mission identified Intermediate Results Indicators, within the scope of CAE activities. Specifically, the indicators required are :
 - **IRI 2.2.1** : Volume of **(a)** rice, **(b)** maize, **(c)** millet, and **(d)** sorghum processed.
 - **IRI.2.2.2** : Volume of **(a)** hides and **(b)** skins processed through domestic tanneries, prior to export, in targeted areas.
 - **IRI 2.2.3** : Volume of **(a)** mangos, **(b)** shallot, and **(c)** potatoes processed by Malian enterprises in targeted areas.
 - **IRI 2.2.4** : Total number of registered agricultural processing businesses in annually updated records.
 - **IRI 2.3.1** : Total volume of **(a)** rice, **(b)** maize, **(c)** millet, and **(d)** sorghum sold in **(i)** domestic and **(ii)** export markets.
 - **IRI 2.3.2** : Number of live cattle exported in targeted areas.
 - **IRI 2.3.3** : Total volume of **(a)** mangos, **(b)** shallot, and **(c)** potatoes sold in **(i)** domestic and **(ii)** export markets.
2. The CAE team completes the project Results Framework using the proposed methodology in section III.B. The Results Framework will include :
 - Implementation strategy for each Contract level Program Performance Measure (PPM).
 - Benchmarks for each PPM.
 - Technical definition for each benchmark.
 - Baseline values for each benchmark, representing condition at the start of Year 3.
 - Annual targets for each benchmark.
3. The CAE team completes the design of a Monitoring and Evaluation system, which includes the benchmarks identified in recommendation 2, and activity-level performance indicators.
4. The CAE team provides a Performance Monitoring Plan to USAID Mali. The PMP will include description of benchmarks and indicators as outlined in section III.C.1.
5. All the activity groups will share responsibility for the M&E system. For each activity group, technical members will be responsible for the definition of indicators, data collection, data quality control, and provision of narrative contents for the M&E reports.
6. A Technical Coordinator should be appointed to oversee the M&E system. The technical coordinator will perform synthesis for the PPM benchmarks, using input from the activity groups.

ANNEX A

List of persons interviewed

Camara, Amadou	USAID/Mali, SEG
Dembélé, Augustine	USAID/Mali, SEG
Dramé, Cheick	USAID/Mali, SEG
Traoré, Gaoussou	USAID/Mali, SEG
Livingston, Geoffrey	Chemonics/CAE, Mango group
Lambert, Andrew	Chemonics/CAE, COP
Diarra, Daouda	Chemonics/CAE, Potato group
Sylla, Amadou	Chemonics/CAE, Rice and Maize group
Magassouba, Mahamoud	Chemonics/CAE, Entreprise Development group
Boukenem, Moctar	Chemonics/CAE, Shallot group
Diallo, Boniface	Chemonics/CAE, Information, communications, training
Doucouré, Oumar	Chemonics/CAE,
Cook, Richard	Chemonics/CAE, Livestock
Diallo, Bocar	Chemonics/CAE